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Austria

Biotechnology

Austria to Lead GMO Debate 2005

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Report Highlights:

Austria views the Swiss referendum against GMOs as strong proof for its own stance towards green biotechnology and is planning a pan-European debate on biotech farming during its EU presidency.

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Austria views the Swiss GMO (genetically modified organisms) referendum as strong proof of its own attitude towards green biotechnology and is planning a pan-European debate on biotech farming during its EU presidency, beginning January 2006.

Last weekend Swiss citizens supported a five-year moratorium on the farming of genetically modified plants and animals. Over 55 percent of voters backed the moratorium, with a majority supporting the ban of biotech plants and animals in all 26 of the country's regions or "cantons."

The Austrian Agricultural Minister Josef Proell announced this week that Austria would hold an EU-wide debate on genetically modified farming. The result of the Swiss referendum would once again show how sensitive people in Europe are to this issue, Proell stated.

Austria is the leading anti-GMO country in the EU. In January 2006, Austria will take over the EU's six-month rotating presidency, and Agricultural Minister Josef Proell announced plans to host a conference on biotech crops on April 4-5, 2006. Minister Proell also announced that Austria would use the time of its presidency to influence the biotech debate.